

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT**



Application No. 14082, of the Catholic University of America, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 to amend the previously approved Campus Plan to change some of the existing uses to include construction of the proposed athletic facility on the North Campus in an R-5-A and R-4 District at premises 620 Michigan Avenue, N.E., (Square 3894, Lots 810, 814, 818, Parcels 135/62 and 135/102; Square 3810, Lot 814; Square 3671, Lot 803; Square 3821, Lot 816, and Parcel 122/70; Square 3655, Lot 1, and Parcel 133/59; Square 3654, Lots 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, and 806; Square 3657, Lots 805, 821, 823, and 825; Square 3927, Lots 10 and 812; and Square 3513, Lot 801).

HEARING DATE: January 18, 1984  
DECISION DATE: February 1, 1984

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The Catholic University Campus is located at 620 Michigan Avenue, N.E. and presently consists of three parts:

- A. The main campus bounded by Harewood Road on the west, Taylor Street on the north, Brookland Avenue on the south, including some areas extending south of Michigan Avenue and east of 4th Street;
- B. The North Campus bounded by Taylor Street to the south, Brookland Avenue on the east, Allison Street on the north and Fort Totten Drive and Hawaii Avenue on the west; and
- C. The Varnum Campus, generally bounded on the south by Taylor Street, on the east by 8th and 10th Streets, on the north by Buchanan Street and on the west by Puerto Rico Avenue.

The site is located in the R-5-A and R-4 Districts.

2. The requested relief in the subject application is as follows:

- A. Approval of the proposed location and construction of the new athletic center in accordance with the plans filed with the application;

- B. Approval of the continued use of the Varnum Campus for a period of five years;
- C. Approval of the conversion of the old stadium building to one-level surface parking; and
- D. Approval of the relocation of one of the proposed buildings in the 1975 Plan and its designation for use as an academic building.

Additionally, in light of recent changes in the Zoning Regulations regarding child development centers, the University requested confirmation that the continued use of a portion of Regan Hall as a child development center solely for the children of its employees and students is permitted.

3. No changes are proposed to the existing boundaries of the University Campus.

4. The Board waived Section 201.3 of its Rules for good cause shown, and permitted the applicant to enter into the record at the public hearing set of preliminary drawings for the proposed academic building noted as item "D," above.

5. The Zoning Administrator advised the staff of the BZA that as long as the child development center was restricted to the children of employees and students of the University, it was an accessory use and did not require further approval of the Board (See Exhibit No. 32 of the record).

6. Catholic University is an accredited university, is authorized to confer degrees, and qualifies as a university under the Zoning Regulations.

7. The Board, in BZA Order No. 12002, dated October 6, 1975, approved a Campus Plan for Catholic University. In BZA Orders No. 12308, dated April 13, 1977, and No. 13639, dated April 14, 1982, the Board approved amendments to the Campus Plan.

8. Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations provides that a college or university which is an academic institution of higher learning, including a college or university hospital, dormitory, fraternity or sorority house proposed to be located on the campus of a college or university, is permitted as a special exception in a residential district, provided that:

- A. Such use is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions;

- B. In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5-A and R-5-B Districts, the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in such districts may be increased for specific buildings or structures provided the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District;
- C. The applicant shall submit to the Board a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including, but not limited to buildings, parking and loading facilities, screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities, and a description of all activities conducted or to be conducted therein, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development;
- D. Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, the Board may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use which the Board may determine is a proper college or university function; and,
- E. Before taking final action on an application for such use, the Board shall have submitted the application to the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation for review and report.

9. The requested amendments would move the location of the athletic facility proposed in the 1975 Plan from the main campus to the north campus. The size of the proposed building is the same as that proposed in 1975. The requested conversion of the old stadium to one level of parking is also a change referenced in the 1975 Plan. The academic building proposed to house science laboratories and classrooms was shown in the 1975 Plan to be a support building. It also was in a slightly different location. Finally, the request to continue to use the Varnum Campus would permit the University to continue to use these facilities on an interim basis for an additional five years.

10. At the time of the adoption of the Master Plan in 1975, the University contemplated that the plan would be long-range and comprehensive, but at the same time responsive to changing needs and changing times. As the needs of the University changed, amendments were necessary to ensure the orderly development and growth of the University. In the present application, the proposed amendments are needed to provide suitable locations for the athletic facility and

academic building to enable the University to control the development of properties within the planning boundaries of the main campus and to carry out some of the long-range plans proposed in the 1975 Campus Plan.

11. The 1975 Campus Plan proposed to locate the new athletic facility right in the center of the main campus. For security reasons and to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation, the University now proposes to locate the athletic facility on the north campus with the entrances off of Brookland Avenue. The proposed athletic facility will have a capacity of approximately 2,000 seats and will employ fifteen persons. There will be 176 parking spaces provided on the north campus, with an additional 1,400 spaces located elsewhere on campus. The new facility is needed to provide modern recreational and physical education facilities for students. The existing gymnasium will be used as a practice gym and as a support facility on an interim basis.

12. The 1975 Plan proposed to construct a new building "R" for support services. In light of the University's need to expand and update its academic program, the University now proposes to make building "R" an academic building, to be used as a laboratory and classroom building for science and research activities and to slightly adjust its location.

13. As also proposed in the 1975 Plan, the old stadium building will be converted to parking. At the present time, one level of parking is projected, with the option of adding a second level at some future date.

14. The 1975 Plan proposed to phase out the portion of the University known as the Varnum Campus. That phasing out has begun, but an additional two to five years is needed to complete the process.

15. Sub-Paragraph 3101.461 requires that a college or university use be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions. The athletic facility is proposed to be relocated on the north campus with access from Brookland Avenue to help ensure that the residential streets are not impacted by the proposal. The North Campus abuts Brookland Avenue and the railroad tracks on the east, a trash receiving station on the north and Taylor Street and the main campus on the south. The only adjacent residential area is to the west, along a portion of Hawaii Avenue. Not only is the north campus secluded from nearby residences, but the entrances to the athletic facility will be from Brookland Avenue and thus will not impact on the residential streets north of Hawaii Avenue. The size of the proposed building is the same as that proposed in the 1975 Plan. Since its hours of use for varsity and spectator events will

be evening hours and week-ends, when the rest of the Campus is not busy, no objectionable impact of any kind is anticipated. The total number of employees who will be working at the athletic facility is fifteen, and 176 parking spaces will be provided for both employees and visitors. The University's athletic events typically do not attract large crowds and it is expected that these spaces will be more than adequate to serve the facility. In the event additional spaces are needed, there are approximately 1,400 spaces located on the main campus with a shuttle bus providing service.

16. The change of use and new location for the proposed building "R" have no objectionable impact. The proposed building will be located in the center of the main campus, well-removed from the surrounding residential area. The increase in its size is 7,500 square feet greater than that approved in the 1975 Plan. The building will be used as a science laboratory and classroom building and students will walk to the building as they do to the other academic buildings in the Quadrangle. Parking is provided at several locations for those students who drive and the conversion of the old stadium to one level of parking will provide 600 more spaces to meet the University's needs.

17. Since the proposed buildings were previously included in the Campus Plan and the only change is a slight increase in the size of the proposed building "R," the density is basically unchanged by the proposed amendments and is of a scale consistent with the neighborhood and the approved Campus Plan. The existing university floor area ratio is 0.23. The proposed FAR with the requested changes will be 0.25, out of a maximum permitted of 1.8. Thus, the University will continue to project an open, low profile residential campus image.

18. The applicant's traffic expert witness compared the predictions that were made in the 1975 plan with regard to traffic conditions, the number of automobiles that would be coming to the subject site, and the availability and use of public transportation with present conditions. The actual total volume of traffic on the principal streets that serve the campus is less at present than was reflected in the 1975 traffic analysis. The traffic volumes in general are somewhat declining. The Master Plan that predicted a growth of about five to ten percent in traffic is an over-statement. There will not now be a substantial increase. The Master Plan anticipated a ten percent use of public transportation. This was before Metro was in operation. The Council of Governments now estimates approximately forty percent use of public transportation at the Catholic University as compared with the original forecast of ten percent.

19. As to the parking spaces, the traffic witness's analysis indicated that if just the first stage of the parking structure should be adequate. The University should never need the second stage. The 600 spaces of that facility should serve the need.

20. The traffic witness noted that the University does not promote major athletic events that attract large numbers of people. The athletic events serve principally the students on campus. There are large number of walk-in attendees to the athletic events. The proposed location is more appropriate in terms of transportation, where the locker facilities are adjacent to the athletic fields.

21. The traffic witness concluded that the plan for Catholic University, as now proposed, should result in no adverse effects on traffic operating conditions on the surrounding streets and through adjacent intersections. The supply of parking should be adequate for peak demands. From a traffic engineering viewpoint, the full development, as proposed, would be appropriate. The Board concurs with the witness's findings and conclusions.

22. The Catholic University properties are located in an R-5-A zone and are surrounded by institutional uses. As indicated in the preamble to the R-5 Districts, institutional and semi-public buildings are permitted. From a mapping standpoint, the University furthers the low-density profile of the area. The granting of this application will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring properties because it will enable the University to make better use of the land in a consolidated manner and will permit effective utilization of property within its planning boundaries.

23. The Office of Planning, by report dated January 11, 1984, recommended that the application be approved subject to a finding from the Department of Transportation that the proposed location and construction of the new athletic Center and the conversion of the old stadium building to one-level parking would not create objectionable traffic conditions in the university campus and the surrounding area. It was the opinion of the Office of Planning, that the amendments being requested to the Campus Plan were minor and constituted refinements. The increase in the floor area ratio of the existing buildings resulting from the proposed new construction would be minor and well within the permitted FAR. The proposed modifications in the Campus Plan are oriented for the most part to the interior of the Campus and are likely to have a minimal impact on the surrounding area. The Board concurs with the Office of Planning recommendation.

24. The Department of Transportation, by memorandum dated January 11, 1984, recommended that the application be approved. The DOT reported that Catholic University is served by direct Metrorail service via the Red Line to the Brookland/Catholic University Metrorail Station. In addition, ten Metrobus routes stop within one block of the campus, including the G4, G6, H1, H2, R2, R4, R7, 80 and 81 routes. The University operates two shuttle buses which service the students and faculty in the Brookland community.

25. The DOT reported that the proposed amendment calls for a decrease in the level of parking spaces originally proposed in the 1975 Master Plan. Based on the parking demand analysis prepared as part of the 1975 Master Plan, it was estimated by the University that the campus population generated a peak parking demand for 1,940 parking spaces. This included 1235 spaces for non-resident (commuting) students and approximately 296 spaces for resident students. At that time the University maintained 1,735 main campus parking spaces plus another 600 available spaces at the Shrine and Varnum Campus parking lots.

26. The DOT reported that the present transportation conditions at the Catholic University campus are substantially different than they were nine years ago. The Metrorail transit system has reduced significantly dependency on the automobile by the campus population since rail service is provided directly to the campus grounds. The transit modal split for the area as estimated by the Council of Governments is 45.6 percent, compared to the ten percent transit share estimated by the University in the 1975 plan.

27. The DOT reported that the ratio of parking spaces available to the campus population would increase slightly under the proposed amendment from one parking space for every three persons to one parking space for every 2.5 persons on the campus. The number of vehicles registered by students, faculty and staff for all-day parking is 3,130, which is approximately forty-nine percent of the full-time equivalent population. Approximately 1,800 students reportedly live on campus. According to the 1975 Master Plan, approximately 296 spaces were needed for resident students. Based on the number of registered vehicles, it is conceivable that the peak parking demand could exceed the number of available parking spaces. However, this condition is not evident from the data which has been presented.

28. Parking conditions in and around the campus grounds, and on the adjacent street system, do not appear to be approaching overflow capacity based on a field visit by the D.C. DOT staff. The traffic volumes on the surrounding street system have increased moderately since 1975. However, the proposed developments on the North Campus would not add any significant amount of traffic to the street

system, since both the athletic facility and the stadium would replace existing facilities with approximately the same seating capacity. Access to the North Campus will be available only from Brookland Avenue, which has a low traffic volume and is removed from surrounding residential neighborhoods. Therefore no adverse effects on the residential community would result. The DOT supports the University's effort to provide a reduced level of parking spaces which is consistent with the transportation conditions that exist in today's environment. The Board concurs in the recommendation of the DOT. The Board does not find any discrepancies in figures between the DOT and that of the applicant's traffic witness to be material to the subject application.

29. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5C, 5A and 4D made no recommendation on the application.

30. There was no opposition to the application.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDER:

Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception, the granting of which requires compliance with the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 and that the relief requested can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and that it will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The applicant has addressed the issues of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions. The Board concludes that the use is located so as not to become objectionable to neighboring property. The total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus does not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. The applicant has submitted a plan for developing the campus as a whole. The Office of Planning and the Department of Transportation have reported favorably on the application. The Board further concludes that the application can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of

the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is hereby GRANTED.

VOTE: 3-0 (Douglas J. Patton, Carrie L. Thornhill and Maybelle T. Bennett to grant; William F. McIntosh and Charles R. Norris not voting, not having heard the case).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



ATTESTED BY:

  
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STEVEN E. SHER  
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: APR 19 1984

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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